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Pregnancy, Birth and Miscarriage Among the Inhabitants of Sakhalin Island (Gilyak and Ainu) /Schwangerschaft, Entbindung und Fehlgeburt bei den Bewohnern der Insel Sachalin (Gilyaken und Ainu/

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/Title page/

/762/

General Treatment of Women. —

844 Among the rest of the inhabitants of Sakhalin Island births
[142] are handled quite differently. These people are the hairy Ainu who in appearance much resemble the Russian peasants. They do not have many of the discomforts that burden the women in childbirth and of which we will say more below. This fact cannot be ascribed to their longer and closer contact with the more civilized Japanese, for other crude customs, which have been preserved to an equal extent among the Ainu and the Gilyak,
844 have not changed correspondingly. The cause, rather, of the
562 greater care which is accorded here to the woman in childbed lies in the considerably better social standing of the Ainu woman.
She is never sold, and after marriage she does not become a
[585] member of a foreign tribe. Kinship on the maternal side is con-
[602] sidered closer than that on the paternal side. Altogether there are still clear traces of an earlier /763/ matriarchy in the Ainu
[182] family. By now it is pretty well extinct but pronounced enough yet to make the life of an Ainu woman far better in many cases than that of women belonging to other tribes.

591 The Ainu girl after her marriage is in no hurry to move
844 over into her husband's house and often spends a few years in the parental house. Therefore her first confinement takes place, as a rule, among her closest relatives. I knew a woman in her middle age who had traveled back home to await her confinement in her parents' house.

From that alone it is obvious that the Ainu offer the woman
843 in childbirth more comforts than the Gilyak or Orok (1). In
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1. The third tribe living on Sakhalin. Its customs are more similar to those of the Gilyak than those of the Ainu.

fact, one notices a definite sense of sympathy and of a certain awe towards the woman who is shortly to become a mother.

[[p. 756-762 on the Gilyak have not been translated – Analyst]]

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843 562 Even during pregnancy the woman enjoys a certain amount of attention and care. I was able to observe that they showed indulgence towards a pregnant woman, that they helped her at work and quietly permitted her idleness and longer sleep.

843 Among the advice to pregnant women especially noteworthy is the rule that recommends that they move around a lot. In this way the fetus is supposed to remain small and the parturition to proceed quickly and without special pains. The closer the moment of delivery, the more exercise the woman is to take. If she sits around much during her pregnancy the fetus becomes too large and the mother suffers several days before the birth is over.

732 843 827 825 A pregnant woman may not eat lobster since the child will then have a hare-lip. She may not eat the flesh of birds either because the child might then be born with squinting eyes which move like those of a bird. In this manner they explained to me a case of hare-lip of a woman in the village Nayero and of two crosseyed brothers in the village of Takoe.

843 784 283 286 Two months before birth a pregnant woman may neither spin nor wind string (from nettle fibres) because the entrails of the child might then get entangled like string. The same can also happen if the woman should want to twist wool.

844 Birth—During the birth a woman does not leave the house but remains in her usual place at the fire. All children, young people, and sometimes also grown-up men, on the other hand, are chased out of the yurt. For they hold the belief that a great number of spectators increases the pains of the woman, and they also consider quiet as very desirable. In order not to dirty the floor they cover the spot where the sick woman is to lie with twigs of fir and pine. They also give her a support of old clothes and a mat woven out of grass. The woman lies down on her right or left /764/ side with a belt clasped lightly around her, which is made of some kind of material, but not of nettle fibres since these are too hard. When the weather is cold the woman keeps her boots on but in the contrary case this is not necessary.

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844 As soon as the child comes out of the vagina the parturient woman spreads her legs. In case she is too weak to move herself a big ball of old clothes wrapped together is pushed between her knees.

An experienced woman always stands beside the woman in labor whom she does not leave from the moment of the first [593] [604] [602] birth pangs. Usually it is her own mother or aunt, but another loving relative may also take her place. Several times I saw that a relative came to the pregnant woman who was awaiting her confinement in the house of her husband, even though there was no lack of experienced women in that particular house. The latter were probably considered more distant or less loving.

844 To speed up the birth and to lessen the pains, they massage 757 the woman. The midwife moistens a piece of a marine plant [824] which is called sea herb (laminaria), she warms it so that slime issues forth and with this slimy mass she rubs first the back vigorously and then more gently the chest and abdomen. On [825] this occasion the following secret remedy is also often used: a dried bat is wrapped up in wood shavings and rubbed over the [237] belly of the sick woman. If the parturition still proceeds with [824] difficulty they pluck some hairs from the belly of a bitch, wrap them with willow chips and start massaging anew.

844 The woman who acts as the midwife prays to the spirits of [782] the deceased ancestors, who are generally considered the sole [769] protectors of women, to help the sick woman. This prayer [539] usually goes like this: "Wherever you may be, my little grandmothers, please help today a suffering woman!"

Only a wise and courageous woman can be a midwife. She must be able to control her feelings and may not lose her head at the moaning and whimpering of the woman in childbirth, or tremble in sympathy for her. She must be able not only to alleviate the physical suffering of the sick woman, but also to pacify her mentally. If it is the woman's first childbirth, the midwife exhorts her to bear her pains patiently, just as other women have done who already have children who now help them with their work and who are therefore the object of envy to childless women.

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844 The birth pangs start with the Ainu women long before the actual confinement and are very obstinate. A confinement is [845] only considered difficult if birth does not take place till the fifth day after the first pains.

844 789 769 The midwife speaks the following words in taking up the child: "Asiri ciacia inankarachty," which means, "new old man, be healthy"! When a girl has been born she says pachko instead of ciacia, /765/ meaning "little old woman." The Ainu believe that their children are sent to them from the be- [842] [975] yond by deceased relatives, who live there in the same conditions as the inhabitants of the earth. For that reason a mother takes her child up in her arms as quickly as possible after its umbilical cord has been cut with a knife, and says: "A! Aino! yok erambotara-anachci ne nanko!" meaning, "Look, people, how disturbed they are!" That is, those who have sent the child to earth now remember this and are worried whether it has weathered its journey safely.

844 [864] The Ainu do not hide anything from their children who know exactly how childbirth takes place. For that reason it is unnecessary to lie to them later concerning the arrival of a new brother or sister.

Behavior of the Man. —

The husband of a prospective mother has to take the place of the midwife whenever the latter does not turn up on time or when the confinement becomes too protracted.

844 778 782 789 The husband of the woman in childbirth helps her in many cases personally, as do the other men in the house. When the woman moans they place in one corner of the hearth a little stick whose surface has been carved with a knife. This little stick is called inau by the Ainu and signifies a sacrifice to the [776] gods, in this case the goddess of fire. For it is this one among all the gods who maintains the best relations with man, and she can, when she wants to, always be of help to man. The men also clasp a string around the suffering woman just below [755] the chest. This string is twisted out of long willow chips and is called cinoje inau, that is, "twisted inau"; it is often used as a

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844 798 782 789 [755] remedy for all severe pains. If, despite all this, birth still does not ensue, another sacrifice is made to the goddess of fire by the elders of the house. A small inau is placed in the middle of the hearth amidst burning logs, and as it is gradually consumed by the flames, an old man sitting on a little mat in front of the fire whispers a soft prayer improvised especially for the occasion. If the glowing stick falls over in the direction of the [787] praying man, this is regarded as an indication that the prayer has been heard and that the woman will soon be relieved of her pains.

[illegible] On the day of birth a husband usually does not work, but not because of some superstitious regulation; rather, he does it from sympathy and sorrow for his wife's suffering. He is also highly interested to see whether his ancestors presented him with a son or a daughter. He asks the midwife about this, and she answers laconically with ochkajko (man) or machneku (woman). [842] I should mention, however, that the Ainu by no means have a special preference for offspring of a certain sex. I have, it is true, heard repeatedly that a father wished for a boy, yet it never occurred, to my knowledge, that one of the parents or of the relatives expressed himself with disgust or anger at the birth 846 of a girl. If the husband of the woman in childbed has an urgent business affair of some sort which cannot be put off under any circumstances, he may leave his wife and the newborn baby as early as the following day after the birth, but only, of course, if the health of both mother and child is satisfactory and there is no more danger to be feared.

846 574 852 [824] [796] [782] [262] [758] /766/ On the first day of joy for the parents the husband takes part in the festival arranged in honor of the birth. Most of all, they throw wild garlic (Alium victoriale) into the fire. This plant is considered the favorite food of the gods and the Ainu believe that they can force the gods to take part in the festival by throwing it into the fire. Rice is also cooked with garlic, and made into a very rare and tasty dish. All neighbors are invited to the feast. These come quietly and are careful

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846 852 574 [758] not to disturb the rest which the sick woman so badly requires. They eat the prepared dishes and take part in the jubilation of the household.

The Woman after Parturition.

846 262 The sick woman is served food of the best and most digestible sort possible. She is given rice and dried or fried fish with seal oil, but no juicy berries and no foods at all that are not readily digestible. Thus I once witnessed a woman in childbed refusing to eat rye-bread although she liked to eat it ordinarily. A woman in this stage is also not permitted to eat very cold foods, and everything is served to her at a tepid temperature.

846 For five days she is not allowed to sew, cook or do any other work. If she is weak her convalescence will last even longer. Under normal conditions a woman in childbed will get up on the sixth or seventh day and gradually go back to her usual tasks.

844 757 [825] [823] The Ainu pay special attention to the childbed. For instance, massage is continued even after delivery. To alleviate the pain it is supposed to be advisable to wrap into the chips with which the rubbing is to be done a piece of the dried uterus of a bear or the tooth of an iron saw. They also massage repeatedly with moistened sea herb. Ainu women generally suffer pains after birth in the sacral region and to remove they they use various remedies. Among others they prepare poultices for the sick woman of sand heated at the fire and then put into a little bag. Also warmed chips of elder (Sambucus) are laid between the woman's feet, or warm stones wrapped in chips are laid on her abdomen. Instead of the chips they sometimes also use grass.

[824]

[514] [824] If the patient's excretions are too violent and painful an infusion of wild grass (arakoikina) is prepared and taken by the woman. They also boil a certain grass, simosineka (Lamium) and a certain tall plant called hopenukina, and with this warm tea they wash the body of the woman in childbed. Sometimes she will also drink an infusion of a certain plant called okina.

[823] A strongly recommended cure for the woman lying-in is that she carry during the first four to five days heavy coral stones of

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844 [757] [823] the size of pigeon eggs which are kept as treasures in every family.

To speed up the extrusion of the afterbirth they wind a narrow strip of silk around the abdomen of the woman, and /767/ she herself pushes her finger deep into her mouth in order to cause vomiting. As soon as nausea sets in, the afterbirth ordinarily separates.

The latter is wrapped together with all the other excretions in a mat and laid down somewhere outside, away from the dwelling, after sundown. If the birth took place during the night this refuse may not be removed till the break of day.

845 The Ainu have never heard of a vagina tearing during parturition, and it is probable that this never occurs with them. But there are rare cases in which the woman is unable to bring forth the child. I knew a widower whose wife had died because of this; for the Ainu do not know of artificial means to help in a difficult birth.

846 Concern with the health of a woman lying-in does not end with the birth. Until approximately ten days have passed the woman is not allowed to leave the house, even if the delivery has taken place among strangers and the woman desires to return home as soon as possible. At her departure the owner of [574] the house in which she stayed prepares soft shavings on which the woman is bedded in the sled or boat.

845 844 114 Comparing my observations of the conditions among the Ainu and the Gilyak I must come to the conclusion the Ainu women bear children with greater difficulty and more pain than the Gilyak women—And this depsite the fact that the position of the latter is considerably worse not only during childbirth but also generally in the family life. A well-known Russian research-traveller, Krasheninnikov, who towards the end of the 18th century wrote a work entitled "A Description of Kamchatka," mentions in this book that among Ainu living on the Kuril Islands the delivery of children is a more difficult process than among the peoples of Kamchatka, since the period of convalescence of the Ainu women on the Kuril Islands,

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895 by their own assertion, sometimes lasts as long as three months
844 after the birth of a child. In 1903, during my stay among the
114 Ainu a 32-year old woman died a few days after her delivery who had suffered violent pains and had lost consciousness during the birth. The child came into the world alive but died a few days later.

896 Twigs of the taxus baccata strongly heated and then laid
824 on the body of the patient are also considered an excellent
757 remedy to help the weakened woman regain her health as fast as possible.

844 Treatment of the Newborn.

[752] The umbilical cord is cut with a knife; the wound is
[237] sprinkled with the powder obtained by rubbing river shells together, and the wound is then bandaged with a piece of cloth. The navel always heals normally and a fracture of the navel is
856 totally unknown to the Ainu. They massage the head of the
844 child several times a day since the Ainu maintain that it might otherwise be misformed. The head must be rounded back and front and also on top. This form the Ainu try to achieve in shaping the soft head of the child. At the same time they wrap the child's head /768/ with soft, warm chips of wood, especially where it is soft.

844 The newborn baby is washed with warm, clear water without any admixture on the very first day of its life. A boy gets a colder bath than a girl. They pour the water in small quanti-
[415] ties from a vessel made of birch bark onto the body of the child which they hold with the left hand over the floor while they rub it with the right hand. It is forbidden to use water for the bath that one has previously had in one's mouth, as is the
[753] custom among the Gilyak. The Ainu believe, that the child will develop a disease of the eyes if he is washed in such water.

844 As soon as the child is wrapped in diapers it is given
853 nourishment. During the first day the newborn is usually suckled by another woman who still has enough nourishment. But when no suitable women is in the vicinity the mother herself will giver her breast to the child right away. When the mother has

/768 cont./

844 853 [292] [278] When the mother has no nourishment for the child during an extended period of time her breasts are tied by means of a sling of soft cloth to prevent them from moving to and fro or from flopping down. They also smear the breasts with the white sap of a plant called to pe kara kina, that is, "a milk-giving grass." Women who possess insufficient nourishment are very rare among the Ainu, according to their own claims. Ordinarily the Ainu women have more milk than the child needs, and I have repeatedly seen women doing away with part of their nourishment or feeding two children with it.

Miscarriage.

843 I have heard from several Ainu men and women that miscarriages are very rare with them.

843 114 For two years (1903-1904) I myself closely observed all changes in the population on the eastern shore of Sakhalin Island and noted down two cases of miscarriage in 1903 (one of a 29-year old woman in the eighth month of pregnancy; another of a 24-year old woman in the sixth or seventh month of pregnancy. Both bore normal, living children one and one half years later). In 1904 I noted down one case of miscarriage (with a woman in the ninth month of pregnancy). In these [163] villages there were in the years 1903-1904 a total of 25 births, and 147-155 women capable of bearing children. Among the latter I count all women above the age of 15 and below 51.

843 164 177 The Ainu do not know that a miscarriage ensues if one of the parents has syphilis. One of the miscarriages mentioned above can be ascribed to this cause (the father was syphilitic).

I have no exact knowledge of conditions on the western shore of Sakhalin Island. It is possible that miscarriages are more frequent there since the inhabitants of those regions are exposed to syphilitic infection through Japanese workers who come to Sakhalin for fishing.

843 753 The Ainu themselves explain the causes of miscarriage in the following manner:

1. If the husband has an abscess on his penis which refuses to heal, this is not considered as a disease; as long as the man does not keep /769/ his defect a secret and tells his wife and

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843 753 her relatives about it, no miscarriage will take place.

2. If the woman falls during her pregnancy and receives a severe shaking, miscarriage will occur.

843 833 After seven lunar months of pregnancy the woman should avoid frequent intercourse with her husband since during this time the male semen might get into the eyes and mouth of the fetus, and the child would thus see badly. They tell of new-born children who have so much white slime in their mouth [845] which, like male semen, is called (owembo), that it cannot be removed fast enough from their mouth and they die by suffocating from it.

846 833 Following parturition intercourse is not allowed for from 30 to 40 days.

842 A typical idea of the Ainu is that conception is not brought about by having intercourse just once or twice. The child, they think, is the fruit of repeated coitus, and for that reason [836] it is considered harmless by the Ainu women to yield to a man once or twice. They only fear the consequences of an extended love affair.

847 177 [843] Among the Ainu, much more frequently than among the Gilyak, miscarriages are induced artificially. The life of the latter is much more normal in the framework of traditional customs, whereas that of the Ainu on Sakhalin Island has been influenced for two centuries by a powerful external factor, that of the Japanese. These interfere to an enormous extent in the life of the Ainu, they change it and import elements that are not exactly instrumental in furthering culture. Especially the women stand under the influence of foreign men who are only interested in satisfying their sexual urge. Hence stems the large number of secret affairs that Ainu women have [548] with foreigners, and it gives rise to the type of women who are given to an only slightly veiled form of prostitution. In both cases they purposely avoid pregnancy and apply all methods to remove it in case it accidentally occurs.

847 The most commonly used method for this, long known to Ainu women, is pressing the abdomen with the hands or some

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847 heavy object. This procedure, however, though it has been practiced by a long line of generations, always remains highly dangerous for the woman and rarely ends unpunished. Old people told me that in youth they had often been witness of how this method of bringing about an abortion had only too often caused the death of the woman. I myself saw a very much degenerated woman who was almost always sick and who could never stand up straight. This woman died shortly after in my presence, and I was told that a few years earlier she had had an abortion by the method described by which she had ruined her health. Some old people told me that there were women who managed it so masterfully that they were able to kill the fetus in their body in this manner several times.

A second method of interrupting pregnancy is to lace the abdomen firmly above the waist during the first few months. The /770/ fetus disappears before the actual end of pregnancy, but in the months following a persistent pain remains in the sides. This method is considered very inconvenient since it is very difficult for a woman tied up in this manner to work. Much less can she take part in the passing flirtations for the sake of which she has resorted to these expedients.

To get rid of the fetus a woman will sometimes jump from a considerable height, for instance from the stairs that lead to the granary built on poles.

To the sympathetic, one can tell of another method, which in the belief of the Ainu women, is supposed to induce an abortion. The pregnant woman cuts her under garment in two
[291] up to the belt, (this under garment is like a chemise which usually has the same length as the upper dress); she wears it cut in this way till the abortion has resulted. This technique is, however, not very widespread and it must be quite recent in origin since it was told to me only by one woman. The others who heard it were only surprised but did not confirm her statements. An old and probably often used method is rust, since
[184] I heard of its use in the north as well as the south of the eastern shore. In the north they add a certain grass, but the men who

/770 cont./

847 [184] told me about it did not know its name. I was not so well acquainted with the women of these regions that I could have openly discussed such a delicate topic with them.

Artificial abortions were, according to what the old Ainu tell, already known in the distant past, since girls enjoyed [836] absolute freedom in sexual intercourse, but were ashamed, or refused, to bear children before marriage. It is possible that at that time other means were also used to get rid of the fetus.

847 177 Now the women use primarily Japanese methods, which are being introduced by the workers and officials of the fisheries that are spread over the entire southern coast of Sakhalin Island. But I was unable to find out anything concerning these methods from the fishermen whom I questioned. Perhaps I encountered people who really had no conception of these matters. Or they probably avoided discussing them with me on purpose since they [648] knew that the new Japanese penal law prosecutes severely all manipulations that are designed to decrease the birthrate. I learned, however, from a more intelligent Japanese, that [824] saffron, which grows wild on Hokkaido Island, is regarded as a very sure remedy. It is highly probable that in Japan many methods are used, in view of the fact that in that country the custom of preventing and interrupting pregnancy is very widespread. Even the Ainu women believe in these sisiam kusuri (Japanese remedies), but they seldom betray their secret which they received on the condition of silence.

845 847 Twin births. Among the Ainu the birth of twins has the same supersition attached to it as among the Gilyak. One of [842] the two is considered of definite diabolic descent since in their opinion man can only fertilize a woman with one child. Such an attitude to two simultaneously born children might lead one to suspect that the Ainu would try to rid themselves of the diabolic breed. I was however unable to find any basis for the suspicion that they have the custom of killing one of the twins. On the other hand, in the book of a Russian traveller of the beginning of the 19th century, Krasheninnikov, such a custom is mentioned, though, in fact, as being current with the Ainu of

/771/

845 the Kuril Islands. But I have the following reasons for main-
847 taining that even today the Ainu are in the habit of killing their twins.

1. Their conviction that of twins always only one remains alive, namely that one, which is of human descent. The deceased twin is of devilish origin.

2. The Ainu family's fear of bringing up the child descended from the Evil One and the continuing disgrace of the mother in the view of her acquaintances. This feeling of disgrace is so
[124] strong that I had extraordinary difficulty in obtaining any kind of information about the mothers who had borne twins. Only such people who were in no wise related to their families or who even felt hostile to them, dared to point them out to me.

3. Finally the circumstance that during my stay among the Ainu not a single living pair of twins was to be found, although I managed to obtain information about two grown-up women of whom both, as sole survivors, belonged to different pairs of twins. In 1902 a woman in a village known to me recovered from the birth of twins which, however, died immediately.

These grounds for believing that even today the Ainu kill one of the twins could at most be weakened by a single tradition on this topic. I was told that twin brothers who remained
[177] alive and whose parents succeeded in bring them up, were favorites of fortune and particularly capable in hunting. It is
[177] however possible that this tradition is of Japanese and in fact later origin, since it was unknown to many. Others maintained, for instance, that among the Ainu, as among the Japanese, only the younger brother is courageous, strong and happy. The older is, they say, in no respect different from the average member of his tribe.

845 The Ainu, like the Gilyak, try equally hard to protect
782 themselves from the repetition of such a misfortune by sacrifices
778 and prayers. In the south of Sakhalin Island for instance, they
184 hang, in honor of the gods and spirits, the usual sacrificial
789 object, the intricately carved stick (inau), over the bed of a
[191] mother of twins. In the northern villages they attach, apart

/771 cont./

845 782 778 184 789 from the inau, two little dolls or rather wooden sticks to the wall, which are meant to represent the twins. This inau is renewed every time the old ashes are removed from the yurt, whereupon they sacrifice to almost all the gods. In the house of one Ainu who inhabited the northern most village of Taraika I saw talismans that had the purpose of preventing the recurrence of a twin birth.

845 /772/ The Ainu avoid women who have borne twins to the same degree as they shrink from twins themselves. They fear that from them the fatal qualities might be transferred to others. In this respect their views are quite different, though, from [171] those of the Gilyak. For they consider soft objects such as household objects of sea weed and articles of clothing as being not so harmful as metal objects or had things in general.

842 789 Sterility. The Ainu believe that a grown-up person can transfer his properties to another. Thus a sterile woman, for instance, will buy various appliances made by a woman with many children. She will use these constantly and she will probably also carry smaller objects on her person. As a good remedy they also give a sterile woman a potion which consists of nothing else but water in which the leather end of a prolific woman's girdle has been boiled. There is also a widespread belief that a sterile woman can be cured if she sits down with her bare buttocks on the just extruded placenta of a woman who has given birth to a child. Some men told me of yet another remedy. The husband of a childless woman lays, without her knowing it, a wooden knife under her pillow which must resemble a real knife exactly. If in a year's time the desired effect has [595] not taken place, the man takes another, younger wife in order to obtain from her the coveted offspring.

842 806 But it is seldom that the Ainu ascribe the fault of childlessness exclusively to the woman. There is rather the general view, that this depends on both mates, or really on their blood which may be hard or soft. If both mates have soft blood they will have a child born to them in the first or second year of their living together. If the blood of one of the mates is

/772 cont./

842 826 hard it will be several years before they can have children. If both mates have hard blood they are condemned to childlessness, and nothing can help them, not even the cures mentioned above. It is significant that in this case they are not permitted [156] to turn to the shamans for help. These would definitely refuse to trouble the gods with such unclean affairs (ciachkire oruspe).

842 597 538 Sterility is not, however, something that should be punished with contempt. A childless family usually adopts a child from relatives. In the Ainu sagas and fairy tales it often happens that brave heroes who have always been successful in life and who have obtained a beautiful wife through great dangers and exertion, remain childless just because they were so powerful (we-nupuru). For children are ordinarily born only to the weaker (we cian) heroes of Ainu folklore.

841 834 589 Women who have no menstruation are recognized as sterile. These are the so-called "pure" who are designated by the Ainu as kiejsach machneku (that is, "bloodless"). These girls are strictly forbidden to have sexual intercourse with men, since they might by this find immediate death. Not long after my arrival among the Ainu /773/ a woman who had preserved her [156] innocence till late in life, died. She had shamanic tendencies and had for a long time been a shaman, from which can be deduced that she had a more tender and more receptive nervous system than the other girls. Among the Ainu can be found women with whom menstruation stops in youth. These women are condemned to complete sexual abstinence. A woman was pointed out to me who, though she lived together with an old man and was considered his wife, slept apart from him for the above mentioned reason. This had been going on for many years.

886 145 Menstruation. The Ainu know that when menstruation ceases that period of life begins for the woman when she is no longer capable of being fertilized. They were, however, unable to give me the average age at which this occurs. The Russian doctor N. Kirilov calculates this age to be 40 years.

/773 cont./

886 145 However, I believe that this figure is entirely arbitrary and based on the statements of only a few persons. My Ainu friends showed me a woman who must have been from 56 to 60 years old since her son was already 34. She had stopped menstruating scarcely three years before and was certainly not to be regarded as an exception, according to my acquaintances. From the statistical data that I collected among the population on the eastern shore of Sakhalin Island, it appears that 12 persons were [163] born to women of over 40 years of age. Of these women five bore children between the ages of 41 and 45, seven between the ages of 46 and 53. This constitutes 20 percent of all the women over 40 on the eastern shore of the island. It should be noted, however, that I only registered cases in which the children had remained alive, that is to say, the actual number of births is much greater. It may therefore be justly assumed that there are many women among the Ainu who menstruate beyond the age of 40 and whose menopause does not take place before 50.

841 145 Menstruation is not always regular among Ainu women. I knew for instance a young woman who later died of influenza at the age of 25, and who, according to her husband, lost so little blood that he would jokingly call her a man. This circumstance the young Ainu considered the cause of her sterility, and he sorrowfully confessed to me, that he would have to look for another wife in order to obtain offspring. She frequently complained of pains and said she had the feeling as though something moved in her entrails that caused these pains. Sometimes she also experienced difficulty in breathing at the same time.

It sometimes happens, though rather rarely, that Ainu women have their menstruation not every month, but every sixth week, which is called kiem o-utur tuima, that is, a great interruption of the blood.

Ordinarily menstruation lasts two to three days, and with some women it last four days. In the latter case it is always painful.

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841 846 [853] [833] After childbirth Ainu usually have no menses for a long time since for an extended period they nurse their children themselves. But if /774/ a woman is not moderate in her sexual relations she will have menses after five months even if she nurses her child herself.

841 297 [439] During menstruation Ainu women wear woven aprons which they buy either from the Japanese or the Russians. In former years they used aprons of seal-skin for this purpose. These aprons are tied round the nude body, not in front, but in the back. In sitting position the blood drips onto the apron and thus protects the clothing from spots. Sometimes it happens that the blood drips onto the floor of the yurt or of the yard when the woman walks about, since Ainu women do not wear any kind of pants. I myself have repeatedly seen such stains, although the women seek to avoid as much as possible such an occurrence which they consider indecent.

841 777 789 Here one can see again the great difference between the Ainu and the Gilyak in the relation of the family to women, which I indicated earlier in describing childbirth among these tribes. The Ainu consider it harmless to look at the blood of a woman or even to tread on a blood spot. In fact the blood of menstruation is even considered a good talisman. If someone sees a drop of blood on the floor he should wipe it off with his finger and smear his chest with it. It is an excellent expedient that can help everyone to wealth since it exercises a favorable influence in financial matters. The blood of the woman on the chest of the man becomes a talisman which brings it about that all those who deal with him in financial affairs have to give in to him, so that he derives great advantage from it. Whoever should get to see an apron used during menstruation, which actually can happen only very rarely, since the woman carefully hide these aprons from the eyes of all, but especially of the men, should ask its owner to give him a small piece of it. This he should always carry with him since it is considered a powerful talisman in the struggle of existence.

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841 204 777 789 755 562

Men who undertake long hunting expeditions almost always have a piece of such an apron with them, which also serves as a remedy for pains. In the latter case they moisten it and rub the sick spot with it.

All this points to the fact that among the Ainu there are still strong traces of the times when the woman played the principal part in the life of the family and of the man.